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Chairman Ortiz, Congressman Forbes, distinguished members of the Subcommittee: thank you for the opportunity to address you today on the Department of Defense's (DoD's) protection of the air sovereignty of the United States.

As reflected in the National Defense Strategy, "The core responsibility of the Department of Defense is to defend the United States from attack upon its territory at home and to secure its interests abroad. The U.S. Armed Forces protect the physical integrity of the country through an active layered defense. They also deter attacks upon it, directly and indirectly, through deployments at sea, in the air, on land, and in space."¹

Within DoD, our responsibility to defend the United States is assigned to the bi-national U.S.-Canada North American Aerospace Command (NORAD). NORAD provides aerospace warning, aerospace control (including air sovereignty) and maritime warning for all of North America. Consistent with the law,² the Secretary of Defense assigns forces to the United States Element of NORAD to perform its assigned mission and ensures that such assignments are consistent with the force structure prescribed by the President.

During the Cold War, NORAD focused its defense of the United States on air threats originating from nation-states. Although the probability of a nation-state air attack has greatly lessened, the Secretary of Defense has said that "the United States still has to contend with the security challenges posed by the military forces of other countries -- from those actively hostile to those at strategic crossroads," and that "the U.S. military must be able to dissuade, deter, and, if necessary, respond to challenges across the spectrum -- including the armed forces of other nations." Since the attacks of September 11, 2001, when terrorists hijacked civilian airliners and used them as weapons against innocent civilians, NORAD's

¹ Department of Defense, *National Defense Strategy*, June 2008, page 6.

² Section 162 of Title 10, U.S. Code.

focus has expanded to include terrorist air threats originating from within, as well as outside, the United States. Terrorists remain the preeminent air threat to the United States. As observed by President Obama during his Inaugural Address, “Our nation is at war against a far-reaching network of violence and hatred.” NORAD’s vigilance against potential attacks from within and from outside the United States is a critical distinction between our air defense posture pre-9/11 and post-9/11.

Collectively, the interagency currently provides 20 layers of security to enhance security in the aviation domain. No system is failsafe, but, collectively, these security measures have created multiple barriers, thereby reducing the likelihood of a successful attack using the air domain.

Through Operation Noble Eagle, NORAD defends the United States by surveilling US airspace and the nation’s air approaches and by positioning air defense alert fighters throughout the country. These alert fighters, whose numbers may be adjusted to meet changing threat levels, are capable of reaching targets threatening our nation’s major population centers and national critical infrastructure within minutes to dissuade, deter, and, if necessary, defeat air threats. Supporting and complementing these alert fighters are defense and FAA surveillance radars, airborne early warning aircraft, and tanker aircraft.

In addition, in defense of the National Capital Region (NCR), the seat of the U.S. Government, Operation Noble Eagle conducts air patrols, maintains a dedicated 24-hours-a-day/7-days-a-week alert fighter response based at Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland, and operates a dedicated, around-the-clock ground-based air defense missile system. In addition, the U.S. Coast Guard supports NORAD with alert helicopters to intercept low-and-slow aircraft in the NCR. In 2005, DoD employed a Visual Warning System in the NCR to supplement traditional radio communications to warn wayward pilots to contact FAA air traffic controllers immediately and to exit NCR restricted airspace they may have

violated. Currently, to facilitate interagency cooperation, DoD maintains liaison officers in the TSA-hosted NCR Coordination Center (NCRCC) on a full-time basis and provides key interagency operations centers and the NCRCC access to DoD's classified conferencing capability, which is used for DoD coordination and decision making during the response to domestic air threats.

Operation Noble Eagle is a joint operation, managed under the Global Force Management Plan to provide timely, risk-balanced resourcing to NORAD requirements for capabilities and forces. DoD ensures that the air sovereignty force furnishes capabilities consistent with U.S. national security objectives and a long-established risk management system in conjunction with the Global Force Management Plan. Although the Global Force Management Plan currently directs the U.S. Air Force to support the Operation Noble Eagle mission, the majority of which is currently provided by the Air National Guard, DoD may draw upon the capabilities of the active duty Air Force or any other DoD Components to fulfill the Operation Noble Eagle air sovereignty mission. In fact, in the past, DoD was prepared to reinforce the air sovereignty mission with U.S. Navy E-2 Hawkeye Airborne Early Warning aircraft and U.S. Marine Corps F/A-18s.

DoD will also continue to refine its risk management approach to ensure that military capabilities and resources are available to carry out its core responsibility to defend the United States. As stated in the National Defense Strategy, "The challenges before us will require resourcefulness and an integrated approach that wisely balances risks and assets, and that recognizes where we must improve."³

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. We appreciate your leadership, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, and your support for the Department of Defense. I look forward to your questions.

³ Department of Defense, *National Defense Strategy*, June 2008, page 18.